

Not Once, But Twice by Val-Creative

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Summary: Nobody ever told Mike it was possible to love more than one person. At the exact same time. Falling in love can be so stressful. /Post Season 2. Mileven. Byler. Byeler. Oneshot.

Not Once, But Twice

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Nobody ever told Mike it was possible to love more than one person. At the exact same time.

Jane Hooper — *El, to him* — she's got a family now, attends Hawkins High School and even made a couple of friends with other girls who didn't fit in either. Mike has caught a glimpse of her smiling and giggling on the telephone with Kimberley J. Foster, poking her thumb idly around the mint green cord.

It's been years since The Gate has been closed. Mike still feels that incredulous joy when she hugs him, cheek-to-cheek, so tightly against her. Mike's body feels like it's on the verge of vibrating.

He loves how El's brown eyes turn honey in the light, and how she looks with her dark, curly hair tumbling around her face. How El isn't afraid to tell him the truth or to stand out. She prefers smudged eyeliner and no bobby pins and thick, black long-sleeves that go all the way to her fingertips. Sheriff Jim Hopper and Joyce Byers has tried to get El to wear the cutesy and pastel dresses, but with no luck.

It doesn't matter to him — she could wear a trash bag for a week, and Mike is pretty sure she would still be the most beautiful girl he's *ever* seen in his life.

"Hurts," El mutters, cupping a hand over her nose. There's a glint of circular, silvery steel hanging between her nostrils, and a trail of crusted blood drying on her upper lip. Mike apologizes frantically, leaning out of a kiss, offering a little, sheepish grin.

She furrows her brows, gazing over him studiously but relaxing.

(Her adoptive dad continues to fume over El's new septum piercing, on the other side of the bathroom door slammed with telekinetic powers. Hopper grumbles and sweeps up the jagged, large glass-ruins

of their living room's cabinet. He'll scold her later about it.)

To him, kissing El feels like touching a certain kind of electricity. Something powerful and not meant for words. He couldn't explain it even if he wanted to. Mike tastes salt and fragrance on her mouth, a tinge of blood. But, kissing Will is... *familiarity*. Will is the reminder of the rowdy, excitable sleepovers until midnight, and hollering triumphantly into the cold, night air while biking home, and everything that happened... *before*...

Will Byers finally grows out of his bowl-cut as a junior, layering his hair, gelling it. He's still soft-spoken, quiet as the traffic rumbling down below the hill. The patches of withered, thorny brush and grass darken around them to indigos and rosy colors. Will's expression appears serene, as rosy as the sky's horizon.

"I wanted to ask you to dance at Snow Ball," he announces. The way he says it sounds like Will comes out of a trance slowly. Mike's fingers grasp around the neck of an emptied bottle, clenching down. "I wanted to ask you..."

Mike doesn't have to say out loud what they both understand. He pushed a reluctant Will to dance with another girl, knowing full well he didn't want to. Mike had been too focused on waiting for El to show up. He didn't ask Will what he wanted, or *who* he wanted to dance with that night.

Like a best friend should have.

He loves how *big* Will smiles at him, and how it's comforting, and how Will moves his hands when he's focused on drawing. Mike has seen the magnitude and *power* in Will's imagination, his mind, what he can do and who he can save. He's stronger than all of their party combined. Will may not be the loudest or gain the most charisma points on a roll, but he isn't afraid to tell Mike what's wrong or be who he is. He's *better* than him, Mike thinks.

Will has survived death and his traumatic experiences. He fights off the nightmares that rattle him out of a deep sleep, causing him to scream and hyperventilate. Mike remembers them the most, gathering Will into his arms and shushing him until a drowsy Will

calms, pushing his sweat-heavy bangs out of his face.

Despite all rumors, there's no taste of *zombie* on Will's lips — only the sting and heat of skin and peach-flavored drink.

How could they say that about him?

Mike loosens open his mouth and presses in him harder, exhaling, curiously licking across Will's bottom lip. It doesn't matter how it happened. A breathy, needy sigh is what jolts Mike backwards, letting his weight go to his hands. Shock and guilt flood him.

Will leaves first, muttering *sorry i'm sorry*, rubbing his eyes and grimacing, climbing on his bicycle.

That's it.

Mike spends an hour and a half on his own bicycle, riding in circles around the Hopper residence, without going to the front door. He swallows back tears and crashes his palms roughly against his own face, as if punishing himself.

"I kissed Will."

The lamps dull to a golden yellow.

El inclines her head, watching Mike's eyes squint and glimmer with moisture.

"I know," she murmurs tonelessly. At the sudden, open-mouthed gawking, El adds, "Will told me. He was crying. He thought we wouldn't be friends anymore."

"I should have..."

Mike's words rush together. El's voice, without harshness, cuts him off. "I told him... that I wasn't mad," she explains. "I'm not mad because he told me, and because you are telling me too." The holes in her fabric, domino-print leggings widen, as El flexes her knees. "Did you think I didn't know how you felt?"

When her fingers tangle warmly into his, Mike processes this.

"Then you're okay with... me and Will?" he whispers, blinking in awe.
"If you and me are together too?"

After a deliberate pause, El examines him with a faint, amused smile and nods.

"No secrets," she reminds him.

Mike laughs softly, wiping his face and squeezing their hands.

"Promise."

He does.

It's the next afternoon when they find Will by himself tossing pebbles against the side of a dumpster. He glances over his shoulder and flushes. "Hi, Will," El says with her lips quirking up, hopping off Mike's bicycle before he manages to drop the kickstand. She walks over and opens her arms, hugging Will securely.

"Hi," Will mutters, squirming under Mike's attention.

She lets go and Mike swoops in quickly, hugging Will who goes bug-eyed and stammers. "You're really bad at hiding when you're upset," Mike says, trying to not chuckle, patting Will's shoulder and looking him in the eye. "You *shouldn't* be upset, okay, Will? Me and El talked, and we wanna try it."

"Try... what?"

Mike gestures between them all. "Me and her dating, and you *and* me dating. Heck, maybe it could work."

Will's eyes land on El who shrugs her hands into her coat pockets, lifting her chin in acknowledgement. "A-Are you sure about this?" he asks with uncertainty, more directly at her. Mike gazes over to his girlfriend hopefully. El's mouth looks ringed and smeared with pale purple makeup, her lips flattening in thought.

"Yeah."

The relief feels overwhelming. Mike grasps both of their hands, in

attempt to steady himself and his pounding heart.

Nobody ever told him falling in love was so *stressful*.

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Stranger Things isn't mine. I GOT THROUGH ALL OF SEASON 2 WITHIN A WHOLE DAY. CONSIDER ME FAR TOO EMOTIONAL FOR ANYTHING ELSE NOW. Mike/Eleven (or Mike/Jane) is my true OTP, but this season sold me on Mike/Will that I was off and on about. Mike Wheeler can be a bisexual polyamorous boy... hear me out. Also for this fic, there's no Jopper past or present. I love it in canon but it wouldn't work for this specific story I'm telling. I just wanted this fic to be short and sweet and adorable as it could be. Hopefully it succeeded. If you liked this, send me a couple of happy words! Thank you! AND TELL ME IF YOU WATCHED THE NEW SEASON!

Edit: All of the disparaging and negatively nonconstructive reviews have been reported and will continue to be in the future. Don't be a salty crybaby when you get the email from FFN because you did/didn't read the ships tagged on this and chose to be intently malicious. ;)